

Recommendations by the Accreditation Team and Report of the Accreditation Visit for Professional Preparation Programs at Aspire Public Schools

Professional Services Division April 2011

Overview of This Report

This agenda report includes the findings of the accreditation visit conducted at **Aspire Public Schools**. The report of the team presents the findings based upon reading the Institutional Self-Study Reports, review of supporting documentation and interviews with representative constituencies. On the basis of the report, an accreditation recommendation of **Accreditation** is made for the institution.

Common Standards and Program Standard Decisions For All Programs offered by the Institution

	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
1) Educational Leadership	X		
2) Unit and Program Assessment and Evaluation	X		
3) Resources	X		
4) Faculty and Instructional Personnel	X		
5) Admission	X		
6) Advice and Assistance	X		
7) Field Experience and Clinical Practice	X		
9) Assessment of Candidate Competence	X		

BTSA Induction Program Standards

	Total Program Standards	Program Standards		
		Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met
BTSA Induction Clear Credential Program	6	X		

The site visit was completed in accordance with the procedures approved by the Committee on Accreditation regarding the activities of the site visit:

- Preparation for the Accreditation Visit
- Preparation of the Institutional Self-Study Report
- Selection and Composition of the Accreditation Team
- Intensive Evaluation of Program Data
- Preparation of the Accreditation Team Report

**California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Committee on Accreditation
Accreditation Team Report**

Institution: Aspire Public Schools

Dates of Visit: April 18-20, 2011

**Accreditation Team
Recommendation:** Accreditation

Rationale:

The unanimous recommendation of **Accreditation** was based on a thorough review of the institutional self-study; additional supporting documents available during the visit; interviews with administrators, coaches (support providers), candidates, program personnel, and completers, along with additional information requested from program leadership during the visit. The team felt that it obtained sufficient and consistent information that led to a high degree of confidence in making overall and programmatic judgments about the professional education unit's operation. The decision pertaining to the accreditation status of the institution was based upon the following:

Common Standards

The entire team reviewed each of eight Common Standards and determined whether the standard was met, not met, or met with concerns. The site visit team found that all eight Common Standards are **Met**.

Program Standards

Discussion of findings and appropriate input by individual team members and by the total team membership was provided for the Induction Program. Following interviews, discussion, and review of evidence, the team considered whether the program standards were met, met with concerns, or not met. The team found that all program standards are **Met**.

Overall Recommendation

The team completed a thorough review of program documents, program data, *New Teacher Center's Formative Assessment System* and portfolios, and conducted interviews with program leadership, site administrators, Human Resources personnel, coaches, and candidates. Due to the finding that all Common Standards are **Met**, and all Program Standards are **Met**, the team unanimously recommends a decision of **Accreditation**.

On the basis of this recommendation, the institution is authorized to recommend candidates for the following Credentials:

Clear Credentials
Clear Multiple Subject
Clear Single Subject

Staff recommends that:

- The institution's response to the preconditions be accepted.
- Aspire Public Schools be permitted to propose new credential programs for approval by the Committee on Accreditation.
- Aspire Public Schools continue in its assigned cohort on the schedule of accreditation activities, subject to the continuation of the present schedule of accreditation activities by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Accreditation Team

Team Leader:	Sheiveh Jones North County PDF/ BTSA Induction
Common Standards Cluster:	Jeanne Savoy Burbank USD/BTSA Induction
Program Standard Sampling	Kathy Hansen Kern County SOS/BTSA Induction
Staff to the Visit	Cathy Payne CTC Consultant

Documents Reviewed

Program Handbook	Program Assessment Feedback
Program Narrative	Scoring Sheets
Employee Handbook	Biennial Report
Common Standards Report	Biennial Report Feedback
Coach Summary Sheet	Teacher Portfolios
FAS Documents	Professional Development Calendar
Organizational Chart	Advisement Documents
Survey Results	Job Descriptions
Evaluation Criteria for Coaches	

Interviews Conducted

	Team Leader	Common Standards Cluster	Program Sampling Cluster	TOTAL
Candidates	4	6	10	20
Completers	7			7
Site Administrators	5	7	5	17
Support Providers	6	3	4	13
Prof. Development Providers	7	5	6	18
Program Coordinator	1	1	1	3
Leadership Team		3	3	6
Credential Analyst		1		1
District Office Administration		3	4	7
TOTAL				92

Note: In some cases, individuals were interviewed by more than one cluster (especially faculty) because of multiple roles. Thus, the number of interviews conducted exceeds the actual number of individuals interviewed.

Background information

Aspire Public Schools is a non-profit organization that currently operates 30 high-performing open enrollment charter schools throughout California, with an emphasis on serving low income communities. They focus on one goal – preparing urban students for college. This goal is encapsulated in their motto of “College for Certain.” Aspire offers schools in six communities throughout California, including East Palo Alto, Modesto, Oakland, Stockton, Sacramento and Los Angeles. After opening new schools in 2010, Aspire serves 9,800 students in grades K-12. Three new schools are slated to open next year.

Aspire’s mission is to build and operate small, high-quality charter schools in low-income neighborhoods, and send more students to college. It is core to the work at Aspire that teachers recognize and seek to eliminate bias in the classroom and create equitable learning communities that contribute to the physical, social, emotional and intellectual safety of all students. Aspire’s student population is ethnically diverse. Approximately 52% of the students are English Language Learners, 66% of the students are Hispanic and an additional 22% are non-white.

Teachers, support coaches, and professional development providers are becoming an increasingly diverse population as well. One goal of Aspire schools is to “grow from within” i.e. the students from Aspire schools will graduate, go on to college, and return as teachers in their own communities.

Education Unit (Induction Program)

There are 130 candidates in the Induction program this year. Two are participating in the Early Completion Option, 78 are in year one, and 52 candidates are in year two of the program. All 30 sites have induction candidates, aligning with Aspire’s goal to have teams of teachers at each grade level or in each subject area that have a full range of teaching experience. The program has 15 full release coaches (support providers) and 16 site based coaches currently working with candidates. Professional development is provided by the induction coaches and the content area coaches and is

designed to meet the needs of the teachers and align with the cultural context of the site. To date there have been 117 credentials awarded through Aspire’s induction program.

The goal of the induction program is to develop reflective teachers who, at the end of every day, week, month, semester and year, are in the habit of asking themselves, “What worked? What didn’t work? What can I do about that?”

Table 1
Program Review Status

Program Name	Number of program completers (2009-10)	Number of Candidates Enrolled or Admitted (10-11)	Agency or Association Reviewing Programs
Induction Clear Credential	117	130	CTC

The Visit

The Aspire Public Schools visit took place at the home office in Oakland. The team was comprised of a Team Lead and two Team Members. The review began in the month prior to the site visit with team members reviewing the program documentation and evidence. The site visit started at noon on Monday, April 18, 2011 and concluded on Wednesday, April 20, 2011.

Common Standards

Standard 1: Educational Leadership

Standard Met

The institution and education unit create and articulate a research-based vision for educator preparation that is responsive to California's adopted standards and curriculum frameworks. The vision provides direction for programs, courses, teaching, candidate performance and experiences, scholarship, service, collaboration, and unit accountability. The faculty, instructional personnel, and relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the organization, coordination, and governance of all professional preparation programs. Unit leadership has the authority and institutional support needed to create effective strategies to achieve the needs of all programs and represents the interests of each program within the institution. The education unit implements and monitors a credential recommendation process that ensures that candidates recommended for a credential have met all requirements.

Findings

The Aspire Public Schools Induction Program aligns its induction program goals to the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (CSTPs), the state-adopted academic content standards and performance levels for students and state-adopted curriculum frameworks. Interviews with the program director, leadership team, coaches (support providers), and site administrators, confirmed that the program creates and articulates an induction program that is an integral part of the organization's vision of creating a culture of comprehensive support for site, teacher, and student success. Moreover, the leadership team and site administration noted the Aspire Public School Induction Program is a model program that adds value to the organizations goals and vision. When setting priorities for allocating funding and resources, it was reported more than once that the Induction program receives its fair share as evidenced by the exemplary practices it demonstrates. Stakeholders repeatedly explained the induction program's goal is to be fully aligned with the Aspire Public Schools vision that all students attend and complete college. As one coach explained, "To have that happen, we need highly effective teachers. To have highly effective teachers, they need support. Effective teachers can take the students where they need to be." To this end, candidates expressed gratitude and praise for the support they received.

Program leaders and stakeholders organize, govern and coordinate all aspects of the program. The program leadership team members are individuals who participate in ongoing professional development through the New Teacher Center to maintain and grow in understanding their roles while continuing to provide support to candidates. Program leaders also provide professional development for coaches to continue effectively supporting candidates. Coaches and leadership personnel substantiated they are involved in providing input for program design, professional development, and review of candidate completion. It was also reported that a continuous cycle of program improvement is maintained through consistent communication with stakeholders and analysis of data. Monthly meetings for coaches provide opportunities for reflection and feedback that contribute to refining the induction program.

Interviews with program leadership and coaches clearly indicated that program leadership is well-positioned within the organization and maintains necessary authority to represent the program's interests. Interviews with stakeholder groups revealed that they are informed of program rationale, design, and implementation. Program leaders, coaches, and site administrators work in concert to promote candidate success. Additionally, site administrators learn about the program through an initial "boot camp" and maintain continuous communication with the Vice President of Education, the program coordinator, and coaches.

In collaboration with a coach, candidates utilize the *New Teacher Center Formative Assessment System* to advance their practice and demonstrate application of the CSTP, BTSA Induction Program Standard 5: Pedagogy, and Standard 6: Universal Access: Equity for All Students. Participating teachers develop a *Collaborative Assessment Log* identifying areas of focus, and they access professional development in support of those goals through the support of their coach and site-based meetings. Interviews with coaches noted the strong alignment between the work in the Induction program and the culture of Aspire. Interviews with candidates revealed that coaches provide guidance throughout the induction process and provide support in meeting the requirements to complete the induction program.

Aspire Public Schools Induction Program maintains a comprehensive credential recommendation process that requires candidates to apply the knowledge they bring from their prior experiences. Program coaches and program leadership informally review each candidate's evidence of application and program involvement at mid-year, then formally at the end of the year. Program coaches provide additional review throughout the year. All candidates who successfully complete program requirements are recommended to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) for their clear credential.

Standard 2: Unit and Program Assessment and Evaluation

Standard Met

The education unit implements an assessment and evaluation system for ongoing program and unit evaluation and improvement. The system collects, analyzes, and utilizes data on candidate and program complete performance and unit operations. Assessment in all programs includes ongoing and comprehensive data collection related to candidate qualifications, proficiencies, and competence, as well as program effectiveness, and is used for improvement purposes.

Findings

Interviews with program staff and a review of documents indicate that Aspire Public Schools BTSA Induction Program has an assessment system for ongoing program evaluation and improvement. The program uses online survey tools including Zoomerang and team member surveys. These surveys allow candidates to provide feedback regarding the support they receive from their coaches. The program also uses state survey data as an assessment tool to guide program decisions. Internal program assessment is also evident through the evaluations of professional development and the use of FAS for candidates.

Data is collected and analyzed throughout the school year beginning with the week-long summer institute where coaches survey participants to find out more about their needs. In addition, candidates are surveyed at the end of the institute to help guide the professional growth needed to meet candidate needs. The formal evaluation feedback from the state and the informal feedback from professional development and Zoomerang are used to construct the program design changes for the subsequent year. The program leadership uses this data to further support coaches in their own areas for growth. After interviews with the coaches, it was evident that the process for analyzing data included many of the stakeholders. The program leadership confirmed that they are responsible for implementing change. Coaches reported the program looks at feedback and makes changes accordingly: "They listen and act on supporting all teachers in content areas."

Biennial reports, conversations with program staff, and the review of candidate portfolios demonstrated ongoing and comprehensive data collection related to candidate qualifications,

proficiencies, competence, and program effectiveness. Candidates work closely with their coaches who maintain and compile evidence for the portfolios. Coaches stated that the portfolio review provides feedback for them and the candidate. The portfolio review process is collaborative and includes conversations with other coaches about the accumulated evidence and next steps. Implications for the application of new knowledge to teaching and learning are considered by careful analysis of the data collected from lesson cycles, *Collaborative Assessment Logs*, candidate portfolios, and feedback from surveys, candidates, and coaches. It is evident, after comprehensive review, that the commitment to a quality program that is based upon the needs of the candidates is the focus of all stakeholders.

Standard 3: Resources

Standard Met

The institution provides the unit with the necessary budget, qualified personnel, adequate facilities and other resources to prepare candidates effectively to meet the state-adopted standards for educator preparation. Sufficient resources are consistently allocated for effective operation of each credential or certificate program for coordination, admission, advisement, curriculum and professional development, instruction, field-based supervision and/or clinical experiences, and assessment management. Sufficient information resources and related personnel are available to meet program and candidate needs. A process that is inclusive of all programs is in place to determine resource needs.

Findings

The program leadership expressed a strong commitment to educator preparation, which is demonstrated through the agreement to keep funding resources at an appropriate level to support program and participating teacher success. The funding sources supporting Aspire Public Schools Induction Program include the state allocation and funds from the Gates Foundation, The Walton Family Foundation, New Schools Venture Fund, The Broad Foundation, The Irvine Foundation and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. Additional program components supported by the organization include time commitment and human resources. The program allocates a substantial portion of its budget to provide trained coaches that are accessible at any time.

The program coordinator and the Vice President of Education oversee the induction program. Interviews and document review confirmed that professional development providers are primarily in-district personnel such as coaches, the program coordinator and principals, although outside resources are also utilized. Interviews with coaches and candidates also confirmed the importance of professional development in supporting the growth of all teachers. Classroom-based and full release coaches work closely with candidates to conduct classroom observations, real time coaching, co-teaching, and model lessons.

Candidates and coaches are given the opportunity to utilize the Teacher Resource Portal, books, articles, and instructional materials to meet candidate needs. Candidates have access to an assortment of professional books and materials based on current research-based instructional information and strategies.

The program coordinator maintains a list of new hires who participate in Aspire's induction program, beginning with the weeklong summer institute. The program works with Human Resources to verify candidate completion, and human resources makes the credential recommendation. The program coordinator takes the responsibility for supporting the candidate by working with site administration to assign a coach, communicate and meet with coaches, facilitate portfolio reviews, and field any questions or concerns. Data collected from interviews with

candidates and coaches revealed that the direct access to, and efficient response from, the program coordinator directly related to their success in the induction program.

Through a review of documentation and interviews with program leadership, it is evident that the scope of work for the BTSA Induction coordinator and the Vice President of Education includes oversight for the program design, implementation, budget, staffing, and allocation of resources for support of the candidates in the program. Evaluating the program, collaborating with other programs, relaying induction information to the coaches, candidates, lead teachers, and principals, and communicating with cluster leadership, are all part of a process in place to determine resources, needs, and allocation.

Standard 4: Faculty and Instructional Personnel

Standard Met

Qualified persons are employed and assigned to teach all courses, to provide professional development, and to supervise field-based and/or clinical experiences in each credential and certificate program. Instructional personnel and faculty have current knowledge in the content they teach, understand the context of public schooling, and model best professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service. They are reflective of a diverse society and knowledgeable about diverse abilities, cultural, language, ethnic and gender diversity. They have a thorough grasp of the academic standards, frameworks, and accountability systems that drive the curriculum of public schools. They collaborate regularly and systematically with colleagues in P-12 settings/college/university units and members of the broader, professional community to improve teaching, candidate learning, and educator preparation. The institution provides support for faculty development. The unit regularly evaluates the performance of course instructors and field supervisors, recognizes excellence, and retains only those who are consistently effective.

Findings

The primary providers of support for induction candidates are induction coaches (support providers). The coaches are recruited from the Aspire Lead Teacher and Model Teacher ranks. Aspire follows fair, well-articulated hiring processes that are monitored. Induction coaches provide professional development and are the primary resource for induction candidates in one-on-one meetings as well as small and large group trainings conducted periodically throughout the year. Beginning with the Summer Institute, the coaches provide professional development for candidates throughout the year.

During the application process, induction coaches demonstrate an applied knowledge of academic state standards and performance levels for students, curriculum frameworks, accountability systems, *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (CSTP), adult learning theory, presentation/facilitation skills, and group processes. Interviews with coaches confirmed that all coaches go through a rigorous application process which includes paper screening, phone interview, panel interview, a demonstration lesson, and the debriefing of a teacher observation.

As evidenced through interviews and observation, instructional personnel and faculty are reflective of a diverse society. In addition, Aspire implements a Teacher Residency Program, in conjunction with the University of the Pacific, recruiting members of the community to become teachers and an integral part of the school community. Interviews and document review support that coaches augment their knowledge about diverse abilities, cultural diversity, and language, ethnic and gender diversity during their initial training. This training is followed-up throughout the year during monthly coach meetings.

All coaches are required to participate in training on the state-adopted academic content standards and frameworks in addition to training in their formative assessment model based on the New Teacher Center Formative Assessment System. Evidence demonstrates coaches participate in professional development training to acquire knowledge and skills needed to be effective. Throughout the year, coaches meet and collaborate weekly through conference calls and email.

The communication among colleagues in P-12 settings/college/university units, and members of the broader professional community is both formal and informal. The Chief Academic Officer and Vice President of Education meet regularly with colleges and universities in the areas. The induction coordinator participates in BTSA Induction cluster activities and is the channel for communication among the stakeholders. The induction coordinator communicates through email, phone calls, conference calls, and meetings. Interviews revealed that coaches, participating teachers, and administrators were very comfortable in asking for support or clarification from the induction coordinator. In addition, the induction coordinator, Chief Academic Officer, and Vice President of Education meet regularly as a leadership team. They are involved in reviewing assessment data and making recommendations for changes to the program based on feedback from surveys, conversations, email and other input. Interviews indicate that the leadership team is a committed group of individuals who are involved in collaboration regarding the ongoing assessment and improvement of candidate preparation.

Interviews with candidates and coaches and a review of program documents confirmed their participation in professional development and other various training opportunities. Professional development is offered regularly. All coaches are required to participate in staff development on the state-adopted academic content standards and frameworks. Coaches are both induction and content experts. Evidence demonstrated participation in professional development training to acquire knowledge and skills needed to be an effective coach. Aspire's induction coaches receive training for their roles and responsibilities through a series of meetings, trainings and documents, including orientation to induction at Aspire, review of the organizational chart, Journal of Induction Candidate, and the induction score sheets. There was also evidence that there is an opportunity for coaches to attend training from outside personnel such as Lee Canter and Fred Jones. The induction coordinator offers individual support to coaches as needed.

The New Teacher Center trains the Vice president of Education and the Induction Program coordinator, who in turn train the coaches in the New Teacher Center philosophy of formative assessment through conversations and the NTC tools. A review of portfolios revealed that participating teachers complete the formative assessment process over a period of two years. The academic standards, frameworks and CSTPs are embedded into this system of formative assessment and require participating teachers to complete a rigorous inquiry process, focusing on induction standards 5 and 6, including planning, teaching, reflection, and application. One coach stated, "I can't imagine a better vehicle than the induction program to improve my craft as a teacher."

Participating teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their coaches. This evaluation is used to provide feedback to coaches and to plan future professional development. Placement and/or retention of coaches is impacted by this feedback. The program also has a coach compensation and evaluation process in place. Coaches have a variety of opportunities to self-reflect. Coaches use the NTC's Collaborative Assessment Log (CAL) form to reflect with a coach colleague. They also use survey data from inductees and receive mid-year feedback and coaching from their direct supervisor, to reflect on goals and next steps. In addition, feedback is given to coaches on the year 1 and year 2

candidate scoring sheets (portfolio evidence). All of this is a part of the evaluation and compensation process.

Standard 5: Admission

Standard Met

In each professional preparation program, applicants are admitted on the basis of well-defined admission criteria and procedures, including all Commission-adopted requirements. Multiple measures are used in an admission process that encourages and supports applicants from diverse populations. The unit determines that admitted candidates have appropriate pre-professional experiences and personal characteristics, including sensitivity to California's diverse population, effective communication skills, basic academic skills, and prior experiences that suggest a strong potential for professional effectiveness.

Findings

Candidates are admitted on the basis of employment in an appropriate educational position, possession of a valid preliminary teaching credential, and other Commission-adopted requirements. Aspire is an equal opportunity employer and adheres to federal and state hiring practices. The credential analyst and director confirmed a process is in place to review credentials, transcripts, and previous induction documentation for placement of the candidate into the Aspire Induction Program. An Induction Commitment Letter is signed by each participating teacher to ensure accurate documentation of information.

The tracking tool document revealed that data regarding professional credential requirements is recorded in a shared database with human resources. This data is shared regularly throughout the year between program personnel and human resources. Interviews with the coordinator, credential analyst, and site administrators confirmed that there is constant communication to ensure that all new hires are informed about the Induction Program and have an opportunity to participate.

Interviews with the site principals and program documentation revealed a comprehensive hiring process which includes paper screening, phone interviews, panel interviews, a demonstration lesson and reflection, and an opportunity to demonstrate collaboration skills. Interview questions ensure that the beginning teacher possesses the attributes necessary to successfully teach California's diverse population and the characteristics to be a successful, effective teacher. Administrators, the chief academic officer, and the vice president of education stressed the importance of hiring only the most qualified teachers.

Standard 6: Advice and Assistance

Standard Met

Qualified members of the unit are assigned and available to advise applicants and candidates about their academic, professional and personal development, and to assist each candidate's professional placement. Appropriate information is accessible to guide each candidate's attainment of all program requirements. The institution and/or unit provide support and assistance to candidates and only retains candidates who are suited for entry or advancement in the education profession. Evidence regarding candidate progress and performance is consistently utilized to guide advisement and assistance efforts.

Findings:

At the point of hire, teacher candidates are notified of the Apsire Induction Program. At an induction orientation luncheon, they are informed about the induction program, eligibility, and the criteria. Teacher candidates are given a cover letter and commitment document to be completed and returned to the induction coordinator. Upon returning the commitment document, a coach is assigned to the candidate based on location, grade, and subject area. New candidates are given a program overview during the orientation meeting with the induction program coordinator, as part of a week-long training in July. Coaches also begin meeting weekly with their candidates in July where the criteria is restated and any questions of eligibility are answered. Teacher candidates reported that having a coach assigned at the very beginning of induction was a positive step in establishing a professional relationship and complete buy-in to the community. Teachers are advised initially regarding program requirements for the Early Completion Option (ECO). It is preferable that all new teachers take advantage of the full two years of induction coaching, however plans are crafted by the coach in conjunction with the induction program coordinator if ECO is in the best interest of the teacher candidate.

During the year, coaches advise and guide candidates about the program requirements necessary for completion. Coaches support the completion of *Formative Assessment System* (FAS) activities as well as provide guidance in setting up classrooms and developing classroom management tools. Candidates reported this guidance and use of management tools set an immediate positive atmosphere in the classroom. A schedule of “happenings” helps make the school year less threatening for the candidates and allows instructional planning to be developed.

At least twice a year, candidates submit evidence portfolios for review, showcasing thinking, reflecting and growing as a classroom teacher. The excel tracking tool is reviewed and updated by the induction program coordinator. At least twice a year (in December and March) the induction program coordinator emails all induction coaches asking for reports of concerns about each candidate's progress. If an induction candidate has fallen behind for any reason, steps can be taken to remedy the situation. Coaches reported that weekly meetings with candidates allow for constant monitoring of progress through the induction process. Candidates verified that weekly meetings were often used for problem solving and progress monitoring. At the June induction review, coaches and other readers determine whether or not the candidate's collection of evidence “passes,” based on the scoring sheets. If induction candidates do not pass either year one or two, continued support is given until evidence is satisfactory. Any revisions are reported to the induction program coordinator and updates are recorded as passing. Through interviews with coaches and candidates and a review of evidence portfolios, it is clear that candidates receive ongoing, individualized support and assistance from the induction program coordinator, site administrators, Lead Teachers and coaches, while working to improve their efficacy in the classroom and become reflective practitioners.

Standard 7: Field Experience and Clinical Practice

Standard Met

The unit and its partners design, implement, and regularly evaluate a planned sequence of field-based and clinical experiences in order for candidates to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support all students effectively so that P-12 students meet state-adopted academic standards. For each credential and certificate program, the unit collaborates with its partners regarding the criteria for selection of school sites, effective clinical personnel, and site-based supervising personnel. Field-based work and/or clinical experiences provide candidates opportunities to understand and address issues of diversity that affect school climate, teaching, and learning, and to help candidates develop research-based strategies for improving student learning.

Findings:

The Aspire Induction Program utilizes the *New Teacher Center Formative Assessment System* (FAS) to create a planned sequence of field-based and clinical experiences. These experiences include reflection on teaching practice throughout the process and incorporate opportunities to connect content knowledge with pedagogy focused on English learners and students with special needs. Embedded in the field-based and clinical experiences are multiple assessments of teaching practice, based on the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (CSTP) and organized around structured support from school staff and a trained coach (support provider), to ensure that candidates are supporting all students in learning.

The induction coordinator, Chief Academic Officer, and Vice President of Education meet regularly to evaluate the field experiences of the candidates. Through interviews with candidates, coaches, and the induction coordinator, it is evident that the induction coordinator checks with candidates and coaches regularly, observes candidates teaching, and then observes the post-observation conference. Interviews with candidates revealed that they have a variety of opportunities to provide feedback about the program and their coaches. Recommendations for changes to the program are proposed based on these findings.

Collaboration among stakeholders is on-going. Interviews with coaches, the induction coordinator, and administrators confirmed that they collaborate to determine the criteria for the selection of coaches and school site placement. The induction coordinator assigns the coaches to candidates based on site, grade level/content area, and team considerations.

Review of evidence and interviews with administrators, coaches, and candidates confirmed that through the summer institute and ongoing site-based support, candidates have multiple opportunities to understand and address the needs of their diverse student population. Candidates demonstrate knowledge and skills through self-reflection and self-assessment based on the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*, *Induction Standard 5: Pedagogy*, and *Induction Standard 6: Universal Access*. Candidates reported having opportunities for ongoing reflection upon student contextual and academic data, allowing them to develop research-based Individual Learning Plans and Inquiry Action Plans to address student needs and provide an individualized academic program. Coaches work closely with candidates to provide support in the areas of need for each candidate. Candidates communicate and collaborate with each other through grade level meetings and content area meetings to ensure that they are addressing student academic needs. They also create plans to maximize success. Site administrators, coaches, and the induction coordinator ensure that candidates have the support and resources to improve student learning.

Interviews revealed that candidates feel well-supported in all aspects of completing the induction program. One candidate stated, “The induction program has taught me to work smarter.” Another commented, “Going through induction is just becoming a better teacher. The activities I do are not extra work but part of my ongoing work to improve the learning of my students.”

Standard 9: Assessment of Candidate Competence

Standard Met

Candidates preparing to serve as professional school personnel know and demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate and support effectively all students in meeting the state-adopted academic standards. Assessments indicate that candidates meet the Commission-adopted competency requirements, as specified in the program standards.

Findings:

Candidates in the Aspire Induction Program know and demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills to educate all students through their work with their coaches and the Formative Assessment System (FAS). This was confirmed through interviews with candidates, completers, and coaches and through examination of portfolios. The completion of the program requirements and subsequent submission of the portfolio demonstrates the professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate and effectively support students in meeting the state-adopted content standards as outlined in *Induction Standards 5: Pedagogy and 6: Universal Access*. At the end of each year, candidates submit their portfolios consisting of a collection of evidence demonstrating growth in meeting these standards. In addition, they write two essays which are each a synopsis detailing growth in practice over each year in the induction program. One essay addresses growth in each of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and the other addresses the growth of student achievement. Year 1 focuses on the implementation of strategies to ensure the growth of English learners while Year 2 focuses on the full range of special population students.

Each portfolio is reviewed by a member of the portfolio review team which consists of program leaders, site administrators, and coaches. Reviewers use a standardized scoring guide to ensure that each candidate meets the completion requirements. The expectations for the portfolio are clearly communicated to the candidates and the coaches. In interviews, the administrators, coaches, and candidates all described this process as informative and meaningful. All stated that the process helped them to grow professionally. If a candidate does not receive a satisfactory score on any section of the portfolio, the portfolio is returned to the candidate. The coach and candidate work together to revise the portfolio for a satisfactory score. Only candidates who have satisfactorily completed the program requirements are recommended for the clear credential.

Multiple Subject and Single Subject BTSA Induction Clear Credential

Program Design

The Aspire Public Schools Induction program implements a rigorous and purposeful learning and instruction-based practice that is directed towards objectively high standards and discourse of ideas supported by collection of evidence. Extended preparation and professional development opportunities prepare teacher candidates to meet the diverse academic learning needs of the K–12 population and allows teachers to become reflective practitioners ensuring that all students are learning and growing in the California content standards. Induction candidates are working towards improving their efficacy in the classroom, learning and growing in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and Induction Standards as they are provided with individual support from administration, lead teachers, and qualified trained instructional induction coaches.

Interviews with induction candidates verified that they put into practice the learning from their preliminary preparation throughout the formative assessment process in FAS. During the formative assessment process, candidates self-assess using formative assessment and program-developed assessment tools. Candidates develop best teaching practices and reflect upon their teaching through the lens of student learning. Individual learning plans are formulated by candidates with the guidance of their coaches to identify areas of both strength and growth. FAS is designed to focus on the CSTPs, Induction Standards, and the *California Academic Content Standards for Students*. Candidates gather evidence and self-assess to customize instruction in their own classroom in a way that is most relevant to their practice. Using differentiation and diversity as the overarching umbrella, candidates embed strategies to best meet the needs of English learners and special population students. Candidates are critical users of technology and involve students in the use of available technology resources to advance student learning. For example, candidates reported during interviews that their students “...love to use the document readers”.

Interviews with induction coaches indicated that the reflective practice built into FAS allows teachers to illustrate best practices in a “story” format—it is not “hoop-jumping or grocery list check off.” Evidence reviewed and illustrated in induction candidates’ portfolios supports this statement as induction candidates relate the story of their first and second years of teaching. One coach stated that induction had formalized her abilities and made the practice of instruction meaningful in every way—making it almost tempting to go back into the classroom. Site administrators state that the coaching is very purposeful based on what new teachers need in order to move their practice forward. Only those teachers who understand that learning is a life long process are retained. The team approach is further emphasized in creating content and grade-alike families so that all stakeholders are on the same page.

Aspire’s induction program is overseen through the collaboration of the Chief Academic Officer, program coordinator and the Vice President of Education. They collectively manage the day-to-day requirements of the induction program ensuring that pedagogy, differentiation, management, routines and procedures are contextualized. This also ensures that all aspects of the program are aligned with the mission and vision of the organization. Collaboration among all stakeholders is continuously maintained via email, phone conversations, professional development

opportunities, and networking meetings. A quote that captured what site administrators and induction coaches both reported is that everything implemented always comes back to “What’s best for the teachers translates into what’s best for the students. With this fantastic team at the top, the working environment is a pleasure. Change is evident because of the building of skill levels and wonderful ‘customer service’ is available.”

The impact of program modifications reveals that the program is analyzing and responding to the data collected from all stakeholders. The structure of the organization has been changed but no changes have been made to the program standards. Changes include: Special Education teachers are included in the week-long summer seminar; content specific coaches, i.e. physical education coaches for physical education induction candidates, have been added; and coaches are provided with additional on-going formative feedback regarding the quality of their work, in order to improve program performance. Interviews with induction candidates and coaches illustrate that best practices are demonstrated in the application of state adopted academic standards and performance levels for students. Candidates are encouraged to adopt a “first day, first week, first month approach” during the summer seminar allowing the candidates to be cognizant of their community and its’ culture. Maintaining a healthy environment is paramount to the success of the students as candidates are using community resources to differentiate instruction so that all students’ needs are being met.

Stakeholders also reported that this is a “top down, bottom up” program built upon regular collaboration and communication with district personnel, the credential analyst, staff, and site administration. A process is in place to ensure that all eligible teachers are identified and participate in the induction program. Candidates and site administrators reported that Aspire “...really looks out for our teachers—we honor both teaching and learning. This is paramount to the success of our students and the retention of quality teachers.” All stakeholders agreed that everyone is on the same page. They are aware of program requirements, deadlines and expectations necessary to develop teachers who are confident in their craft and supported in their professional development in order to stay at the cutting edge of educational trends.

Course of Study

The Aspire Induction Program offers professional development on many levels: Site administrators attend a “Boot Camp” where they become “Aspirized”; induction candidates attend a summer institute; coaches attend in-district FAS training that parallels the training done at the New Teacher Center and monthly professional development opportunities are designed to meet the needs and wants of the participants. Staff retreats ensure a team approach to learning and all participants beginning on the same page. Coaches support candidates in their classrooms with their students in two critical ways: First, coaches are able to help teachers serve the immediate needs of the students in their classrooms; second, coaches are able to help teachers identify effective habits and routines in their pedagogical practice that will empower them throughout their career. Ongoing professional development is offered throughout the school year where candidates and coaches come together as a team. These practices enable teachers to feel more effective with their students thereby increase teacher retention rates at Aspire.

The Aspire Induction Program uses the Formative Assessment System (FAS), developed by the New Teacher Center, for candidates. Locally designed accountability tools, primarily the two reflective essays, are utilized in conjunction with the FAS tools. The collection of evidence has

been examined and revised with the development of a scoring sheet, the results of which serve to provide formative feedback to coaches, showcasing best practices surrounding the induction standards and CSTP language, and demonstrating candidate competency. Coaches stated that being a reader of the evidence document was the single best professional development opportunity available. Site administrators echoed the benefit of being calibrated in reading the evidence portfolio.

Candidate Competence

Candidates collect evidence of their thinking, reflecting and growth as a classroom teacher which guides their completion of all program requirements. Using Induction Standards 5 and 6 as their criterion, coaches support the induction candidates in their fieldwork, using the FAS tools as the scaffold for which to capture their reflections. The coaches are keepers of the collection of evidence. Additionally, each candidate crafts two reflective essays: one demonstrating their personal growth through the indicators of the CSTP rubric; the second noting the growth of their students' achievement. The student achievement essay cites baseline data of the candidate's classroom students (from fall benchmarks) and reflections on their growth from fall to winter, and then again marks growth (or lack of growth) in the spring. At each benchmark teachers consider "What practices worked, what didn't, and why," and then determine how it impacted student learning evidenced by data, observation of students and anecdotal notes.

The second essay is the candidate's reflections using the Continuum of Practice, the indicators the state has deemed best practices for new educators. They consider which indicators have shown growth and which ones they have yet to achieve. The Continuum of Practice is the scaffold for learning and guides the candidate's reflection on growth related to the standards for the teaching profession.

At the close of both years 1 and 2, the collections of evidence are reviewed and scored by a cadre of principals, lead teachers, and all induction coaches from across Aspire's regions. Two scorers, other than the assigned coach, assess the work, determining if it meets the standards set by the state. With two satisfactory reviews, the candidates are able to be recommended for a clear credential (at the end of year 2). If the candidate is lacking in any area, the coach has additional time to meet with the candidate and assist them as they complete the program requirements and their collection of evidence.

The second program assessment piece within the collection of evidence is demonstrated in the use of the NTC formative assessment tools. Candidates develop the skills for reflective practitioners with the use of the formative assessment tools throughout the two-year process. For ELL, special populations and equity and diversity, each candidate is asked to determine, "Who are the particular students? What are their needs? What lesson plans will address the specific needs?" and "Was the plan effective, based on student work or data?" Reflections are captured using the NTC tools. Upon program completion, candidates have clearly internalized the reflective process and captured it within their collection of evidence. First year candidates expressed how helpful the reflective process has been in developing best practices and how influential their coaches have been in the development of strategies based on the reflection upon instruction.

Each induction candidate is required to turn in their best practices collection of evidence for formal scoring in June. After the scoring, coaches share the results with the candidates. Meeting the criteria corresponds with meeting the competencies of the program requirements and recommendation for the clear credential.

Findings on Standards:

After review of the institutional report and supporting documentation and interviews of candidates, completers, program staff, leadership and coaches (support providers); the team determined that all program standards are **Met** for the Aspire Public Schools Induction Program.